

The Story of The Pearl Hartt Cabin

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The Story of The Pearl Hartt Cabin

Information and Photos By Kathy Hartt
Edited by Patrick Okey for the Elk River Guest Ranch

The story of the Pearl Hartt Cabin dates back to the history of our (Kathy's and Patrick's) grandparents' arrival in southwest Wyoming and northwest Colorado in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The cabin is just one reminder of the rich and colorful history of this area. The following information tells the story of the cabin and the family that called it home. This material has been compiled by Cathy Hartt, granddaughter to Pearl and John Hartt (for more information on the family, sheep ranching, Pearl Lake, Hahn's Peak and much, much more, please see Cathy's website at <http://www.harttweb.com/>).

Minnie Pearl Spragg and John Kelly Hartt were married in 1909 in St John, New Brunswick, Canada. It was just a few short years before that John Hartt started his investment in sheep ranching that would eventually lead him to be one of the largest sheep ranchers in Wyoming and Colorado, if not the entire U.S.

While the Hartt family (and their sheep) wintered in Rawlins, Wyoming, the Hahn's Peak area was the summer grazing grounds for their sheep, and as such, was also the location of the family's summer headquarters. While there were several locations and buildings for the family's summer headquarters over the years, the Pearl Hartt Cabin is the final headquarters of the Hartt's sheep empire. After the family divested itself from the sheep business following John Hartt's death in 1952, the cabin was the focal point for the Hartt family and summer-long family gatherings for many years. In recent times, the cabin has been sold and moved from its original location overlooking Lester Creek, which is now where Pearl Lake (named after Pearl Hartt) sits, to its current site on the beautiful Elk River. Following is the story of the cabin and the family who originally called it home.



Pearl Hartt



Minnie Pearl (Spragg) Hartt was born July 29, 1882 at St. John, New Brunswick, Canada. She is the daughter of Arthur Sidney Spragg and Matilda Roberts Spragg, who were early day Rawlins residents. After finishing her schooling, Pearl (as she liked to be called) taught school for many years. She married John Kelly Hartt in 1909. The wedding took place in St John, New Brunswick, Canada followed by a honeymoon in Niagra Falls, Ontario, Canada.

At first Pearl had "culture shock," being a fine New England lady who came west to marry a sheep rancher. As she stepped from the train in Rawlins for the first time with her husband, they were immediately greeted by one of the sheepmen saying, "Sir, they shot Wilks last night."

Over the years, Pearl and her family adapted to western culture and lead two lives - their life on Maple Street in Rawlins, and their life in the Hahn's Peak Basin. In Rawlins, the ladies wore ruffles and bows, and acted like "ladies." They ate three meals a day at a table covered by white linen. Pearl always wore a dress, and smelled like talcum powder or sachet. At Hahn's Peak, she wore slacks, acted like a tomboy and ate at a table covered in oilcloth. While she adapted to slacks later, in those early years she often wore knickers tucked into her fishing boots. And, she smelled like citronella oil, which she used to keep the flies away when she fished. She was known to be one of the best fishermen in the area.

After the death of John Kelly Hartt in 1952, Pearl Hartt moved to Wheatridge, Colorado until her death. She was a member of the PEO, an organization promoting education for women, for 50 years.



Minnie Pearl (Spragg)
Hartt in her wedding
dress 1909



Minnie Pearl and John
Kelly Hartt near
Hahn's Peak 1945



Minnie Pearl Hartt
photo taken 1950



Minnie Pearl Hartt on her 80th
Birthday, July 29, 1962 at the
Hartt Family Cabin,
Hahn's Peak, Colorado



Minnie Pearl (Spragg) Hartt's family in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada.
From L to R: Pearl's mother, brothers Lou and Harold, Pearl,
Pearl's father and Pearl's brother Ernest

Other Members of the Hartt Family

John Kelly Hartt



John Kelly Hartt was born May 13, 1870 at Bangor, Maine. He is the son of Rev. John and Rebecca Kelly Hartt. His father and grandfather were both Free Baptist ministers in that region (at the South Canaan, Raynartdon and other churches). He moved to Canada when he was 14 and later to Albuquerque, NM and Elizabeth, Colorado as well. When he came to Wyoming in 1894, it is said that he got off the train in Rawlins because he did not have money to go any further. He had a brother, one year his senior, named J. Frank Hartt, who later came west to the Rawlins area in 1910.

By the time of his death in 1952, John Kelly Hartt was well known through the region for his successes. He was president or vice president of the three largest sheep companies in the Rawlins region - Pioneer, Cow Creek and Yellowstone. (Yellowstone was out of the Lander, Wyoming area.) In 1931, he was elected to the Board of Directors of the First National Bank in Rawlins where he eventually became the vice president and director. He was also the director of Ferguson Mercantile in that same community. He was a member of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association and the Wyoming Stock Growers Association. In addition, he was a member of the fraternal order of Elks.

John Kelly Hartt was a hard working man. It was said that the secret to his success was that, "he had a dream and he stood by it." Perhaps very telling of his persistence is that when John Kelly Hartt died at age 81 of a heart attack, he was at his summer headquarters in Hahn's Peak. The ambulance was taking him from the cabin at Hahn's Peak all the way to Rawlins (at his insistence) when he died in route in Baggs, Wyoming.

"History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats." B. C Forbes



John Kelly Hartt with his family.
From L to R are Grandma Spragg
(Minnie Pearl's mother), Marie, John Kelly,
Minnie Pearl and Pearl.



John Kelly Hartt



Minnie Pearl Spragg and John Kelly Hartt

The Six Hartt Sisters

John and Pearl Hartt wasted no time in starting their family. They were blessed with six daughters; Pearl, Marie, Marge, Lou, Kay and Dotty.



Florence Pearl April 14, 1910; Olive Marie August 11, 1911; Marjorie Rebecca July 20, 1913; Frances Louise July 18, 1915; Catherine Irene Aug. 24, 1917; Dorothy Matilda Jan. 5, 1921



A late 1920's photo of the Hartt sisters at the top of Hahn's Peak. From L to R are Kay, Marge Lou, Musta Anderson, Marie, Vivian Lee, Pearl, Bob Lee, and Dotty.



1978 photo of 5 Hartt Sisters on the steps of the Hartt Family Headquarters on the shores of Pearl Lake. From L to R: Marie, Marge, Lou, Kay and Pearl.

Florence Pearl (Hartt) Holmquist



Pearl posing in Rawlins, Wyoming, 1925



Pearl at her own cabin on the shores of Pearl Lake - built 1969

Olive Marie (Hartt) Harrison



Marie poses for the camera in Rawlins, Wyoming



Marie with her name sake baby Marie Boggs, her great niece. Taken at Hahn's Peak

Marjorie Rebecca (Hartt) Higley

Marge married Chuck Higley, who was involved with the management of John Kelly Hartt's sheep businesses. By the 50th year of incorporation of the Pioneer Sheep Company (1947), Chuck was the ranch manager.



Marge as a baby with her mother, Pearl Hartt



A photo taken in 1945 in front of the manager's Residence at Hahn's Peak. From L to R - "Bob (dog)", Chuck, Marge and daughter, Martha.

Frances Louise (Hartt) Mitchell



Lou with her baby buggy - taken in Rawlins, Wyoming



Horseback ride up Mount Farwell (near Hahn's Peak) - from L to R are Dotty Hartt, Lou and Obysue

Catherine Irene (Hartt) Keffeler

Catherine Irene Hartt (Kay) was born in Rawlins, Wyoming August 24, 1917. Like her sisters, she lived in Wyoming and spent the summers in Hahn's Peak, CO. Kay eventually relocated with her two daughters (Cathy and Theo) to Santa Barbara, CA. She was a registered dietitian - something she was inspired to do partially because her father (John Kelly Hartt) was a diabetic.



Kay in the stroller with her older sisters (from L to R) Louise, Marie, and Pearl



Kay and granddaughter, Stephanie

Dorothy Matilda (Hartt) Okey

Dotty was the youngest of the Hartt Sisters. She married Homer Okey at Kay's home in California. Homer's family came from Montrose, Colorado where they were pioneers in the construction business, responsible for building the first high school, courthouse, hospital and one of several jails the community had over the years.



Dotty in high school
Rawlins, Wyo.



Dotty's & Homer's Wedding day at Kay's home in California.
From L to R are Dotty (Dorothy Hartt), Pearl Hartt and Homer Okey

The Start of A Sheep Empire



Pearl (Spragg) Hartt



John Kelly Hartt

John K. Hartt started his career in the sheep industry as a ranch hand for several outfits. He worked for the King Brothers Sheep Company in Laramie and also spent time working as a horse wrangler for Ora Haley. He owned his first sheep in partnership with a Mr. Revest, a Frenchman. He also partnered with the Cosgriff Brothers early in his career. In 1901 he invested in the Pioneer Sheep Company, where he eventually became Vice President. In 1903, Pioneer merged with the Cow Creek Sheep Company. In time he bought out the Cosgriff's holdings in the Savery-Battle Creek District. He went on to become the President of Cow Creek Sheep Company as well as the Yellowstone Sheep Company. This was only the beginning of the story of a very successful man who got off the train in Rawlins, Wyoming because he was out of money and could go no further.

By the summer of 1903, John K. Hartt was summering the sheep in both Colorado and Wyoming and was involved in the range wars. There are accounts in history books that say he was dealing with adversaries like Tom Horn during this time. Some accounts tell of him being "driven back into Wyoming" from the cool Colorado summer pastureland by the cattlemen. During these years, his official summer headquarters was in Baggs, Wyoming, just 2 miles north of the Colorado/Wyoming border.

By 1911, the range wars had calmed down enough that he was able to establish a summer headquarters in the Hahn's Peak Basin in Colorado. The first summers, his family stayed in "the little green house" in Hahn's Peak Village. The next 4-5 summers, they spent in the old Ranger Station, which is now under the waters of Steamboat Lake.

In the summer of 1926, John K. Hartt purchased the land that is now Pearl Lake and established a permanent summer headquarters on Lester Creek. The Hartt family owned the cabin for over 60 years and often referred to it as the "Hartt Family Cabin." The photograph below is from 1979. Originally the entire house was covered with split

slabs. By the mid 1930's the wood peckers had made many holes in the upper part so the green shingles were added. In those early days ('26-40's) they used kerosene lanterns and cooking was done on a big coal and wood range - cold water was piped into the kitchen sink from a sunken barrel in a nearby ditch. The bathroom consisted of a two-seater privy 30 yards from the house. The house was "modernized" through the years, including the addition of indoor plumbing for the kitchen and a new bathroom, which was added on to the back of the house.



1979 photo of the Pearl Hartt Cabin on Lester Creek

Additionally, Hartt built a second cabin on the property for his foreman, Harold Spragg (his father-in-law) and his family. Chuck Higley and his family (Marge Hartt) moved into this cabin when Chuck took over as manager of Hartt's sheep operations.



Former Cow Creek & Pioneer Sheep Company Manager's cabin

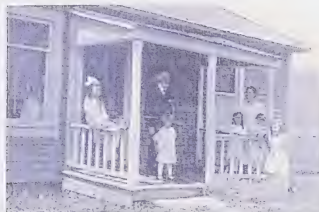
Summer Sheep Headquarters at Hahn's Peak, CO



For several summers the Hartt family lived at the Old Ranger Station east of Hahn's Peak Village, which is now under the waters of Steamboat Lake. From L to R: Granddad Spragg (Minnie Pearl Hartt's father), Pearl, Marie & Lou

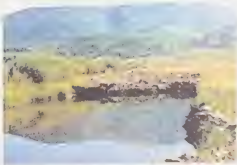


Early Summer Headquarters 1916 & 17: Located on Lester Creek and now under the waters at Pearl Lake. From L to R: Aunt Etta Spragg, Lou & Marie



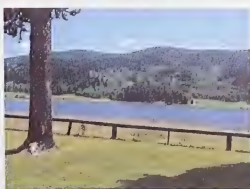
The Little Green House in the Village of Hahn's Peak (where the family spent the summers of 1918 & 1919. From L to R: Pearl, Granddad Spragg (Minnie Pearl Hartt's father), Lou, Marge, Grandma Spragg (Minnie Pearl Hartt's mother), Kay, & Marie

Pearl Lake Ranch - Former home of the Hartt Family Cabin



In the 1980's the family owners of the Hartt Family Cabin and the 23 acres it sat on sold the property to Angelo and Helen Iacovetto, long time family friends from Clark, Colorado. The Iacovetto's still own the property, to which they have added several out-buildings. With the exception of the sale of just the Hartt Family Cabin to the Elk River Guest Ranch in the year 2000, the property remains a jewel, overlooking Pearl Lake, Mt. Farwell and Lester Creek which feeds Pearl Lake. The property is now referred to as the Pearl Lake Ranch.

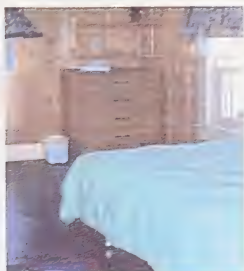
Above right: The remnants of "Minnie Pearl Lake" - a small lake made by the Forest Service for Pearl Hartt so that she could continue fishing until she was 90+ years old. The Forest Service even arranged to have this small lake stocked for her.



Hartt Family Cabin Now at The Elk River Guest Ranch in Clark, Colorado

As noted above, the Hartt Family Cabin was sold in the year 2000 to Bill and Kathy Hinder, the owners of the Elk River Guest Ranch outside of Clark, Colorado. The Hinders carefully relocated the cabin to its current location on their ranch and use it for the ranch office and staff housing. Below are pictures of moving the cabin along with some current photos of the Hartt Family Cabin.





A Bit About John K. Hartt As A Sheep Rancher

From the book *Where The Old West Stayed Young* by John Rolfe Burroughs, published in 1962 by the William Marrow Company in New York. This book has some excellent northwest Colorado history, although it may no longer be in print.

It was the policy of the Cosgriff brothers to extend their sphere of influence by entering into partnership with promising young men. One of them was John K. Hartt, who had been a horse wrangler for Ora Haley in the days when the later was getting his start in the cattle business on the Laramie plains. Doing business under the style of the Cow Creek Sheep Company, the Cosgriff-Hartt operation lay just north of the Colorado-Wyoming line some 60 miles east of the area we have had under consideration.

Eventually Hartt bought up the Cosgriff's Cow Creek holding in the Savery-Battle Creek district. Like Edwards, he took steps to avail himself of the summer pasturage so tantalizingly close in the cool Colorado mountains. Early in the summer of 1903, word quietly passed among Routt County cattlemen and ranchers that several bands of Cow Creek sheep had entered Whiskey and Big Red Parks, northwest of Steamboat Springs and some 15 miles south of the Wyoming border. In the words of one of the participants, "Over three hundred of us rode...and one of the greatest sheep stampedes in the history of the range warfare occurred that night and the following day. Nothing was ever said about it, and no one was killed, but the sheep moved out."

If Hartt was somewhat more cautious than Edwards, he was no less persistent. According to James Hari Sizer, widely known as northwestern Colorado's "Cowboy Poet," who at the time happened to be wagon boss of Ora Haley's Two Bar outfit, "I think it was early June the next year that seven or eight bands of sheep were shoved across the Little Snake River north of Hahn's Peak onto cattle range in a heavily timbered area where evidently the sheepmen thought they would not be discovered...They had little more than gotten their sheep distributed...when one of the herders saw two heavily armed men riding through the timber in his camp. Mindful of what had happened in Slatter Park only a few years previously and fearful that he was about to loose his life, this herder lost his head. Setting his dogs on the sheep, he pointed them down through the timber in the general direction of Wyoming.

In their headlong flight, the band ran into and panicked several other bands of sheep belonging to other owners, the result being that 25,000 or 30,000 exhausted, terrified sheep were forced through dense forests strewn with down timber on the dead run. Inevitably a large number of them were lost, crippled and killed outright. By the time the survivors arrived in Wyoming, the bands were so thoroughly intermingled that it took several days in the sorting pens to straighten them out again.

(Reprinted from page 141. I took the liberty to correct the spelling of grandfather's last name from Hart to Hartt in this passage.)



Cow Creek and Pioneer Sheep Companies



Cow Creek and Pioneer Sheep Company truck hauling supplies in winter.
From L to R: Harold Spragg and Aunt Etta Spragg



Loading bales of wool at Wamsutter, Wyoming



Possibly shearers quarters at Dad, Wyoming.

Sheepmen Are A Special Breed Of People

They are gentle because their sheep require it. They are fierce because conditions are almost always adverse. They are rugged because they are outdoorsmen. They are businessmen because their sheep are their livelihood. They are good providers because they have the welfare of their families and employees at heart. Perhaps more than anything else, they are fighters. They fight droughts, predators, bad feeding grounds, inflation, depression and every kind of sickness and disease known to sheep.

- Albert Poquette, Sheepman

Gentle fierce fighters - that phrase does indeed describe that very special role that sheepmen and their families have played in America. They have come from all walks of life and from widely varied backgrounds. They have been represented by sophisticated innovators, roguish entrepreneurs, preserving stalwarts and presidential aspirants.

But most of all, the story of the American sheep industry is the story of families - families loyal to each other and loyal to their sheep enterprise. Without such dedication, the industry would never have survived the obstacles it has encountered since its first beginnings in the New World to the present day.

What is ahead for the sheep industry? No one can foresee the events that will shape the future of the sheep business. However one thing is certain. As long as American families continue to commit themselves to their flocks with the devotion they have committed in the past, the American sheep industry will always survive - and succeed.

- American Sheep Producers Council

The above citations are from the Wyoming Wool Growers Association's Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming, 1940.



Wyoming Sheep Photos

From Wyoming Tales and Trails



Sheep at Lost Cabin, Wyo.



Sheep at Lost Cabin, Wyoming - undated

As in the instance of cattle ranches in the 1880's, with the rise of the wool growing industry, mammoth corporate-owned sheep ranches were created. John B. Okie, owner of the Big Horn Sheep Company, had financial interests ranging from Wyoming to Mexico. In Mexico he had rights to the Piggly Wiggly franchise and would travel in the 1920's to Mexico by air. In 1930 he drowned while duck hunting on his ranch. By the early 1950's the Yellowstone Sheep Company of Riverton had accumulated 17,000 acres and additionally had an allotment under the Taylor Grazing Act of 3 1/2 townships. A township contains 36 square miles. The Taylor Grazing Act, still a source of controversy, was passed in 1934 and provides for grazing preferences in the use of public lands. Its validity was upheld in 1996 by Wyoming U. S. District Court Judge Clarence A. Brimmer.

The majority shareholder of the Yellowstone Sheep Company, John K. Hartt of Rawlins, was also the majority shareholder of two other corporations, the Cow Creek Sheep Company and the Pioneer Sheep Company. The two between them had accumulated control over 94,000 acres of land in Sweetwater and Carbon Counties. Hartt, himself, arrived in Wyoming shortly before the turn of the century, penniless, allegedly getting off the train in Rawlins because that is as far as he could afford a ticket. At the time of his death in 1952 he had interests not only in the sheep companies but also land in Colorado and an interest in a bank.



Sheep wagon, March 1940, photo by A. Rothstein

Sheep wagons were supposedly invented by Rawlins blacksmith James Candlish in 1884. Around 1900, Schulte Hardware Company of Casper standardized the wagon as 11 feet long and 6 1/2 feet wide, canvas top and stove. By 1904, sheep wagons were being manufactured in the Big Horn Basin by D. V. Bayne of Thermopolis. The wagons later could be purchased from, among others the Studebaker Brothers of Southbend, Indiana. Some are still in use in the Big Horn Basin. The Basin is not the only place in the state, however, where sheep wagons were used until comparatively recently. The above scene is on U.S. Highway 30, the Lincoln Highway, in Sweetwater County.



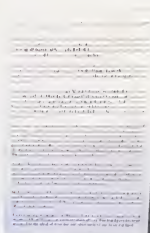
Sheep wagon, March 1940, photo by A. Rothstein

The wool growing industry in Wyoming began its decline with World War II with a shortage of manpower. Although Wyoming in 1910 had approximately 5 1/2 million sheep, today it has barely 10% that number, hardly more than the number of people in the state.



Sheep, U.S. Rte. 30, 1941, photo by J. Baylor Roberts

A Dedication to Pearl Lake State Park's Creators - Officer Bud Hurd & Pearl Hartt



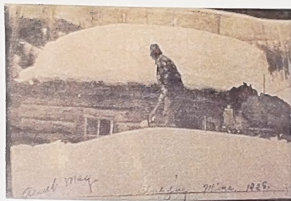
Officer Hurd's retirement 1968, after a long career w/ Fish & Game Dept. Late 1940's record book

Bud Hurd, the local Fish and Game officer was a common visitor and good friend to the Hartt Family. It was through his work - and partnership with Pearl Hartt - that Pearl Lake State Park became a reality. Officer Hurd and Pearl Hartt were visionaries who wanted the public to be able to enjoy this beautiful area as the two of them had done for so many years.



Hahn's Peak, Colorado - Early 1900's

The photos on this page are courtesy of Joan Miller, a descendent of early Hahn's Peak residents, Helen and Charles Edward Blackburn



The Blue Jay Mine, once owned by C. Blackburn



An early 1900's photo of Hahn's Peak Village



Helen Blackburn in Hahn's Peak during the 1900's



An early 1900s photo of the Steamboat Springs Bath House



HAHN'S PEAK

Something happened on this mountain -
violent and prehistoric.

It was volcanic, says the fountain
of crystal under my hammer, and epic

In spans of earth time and molten masses
cooling among the stars. What remains

is me saying, "nothing passes
entirely. Crystals and old refrains

are shaped like mountain peaks and free
from time. Nothing passes entirely."

*Joanna Stevenson Sampson, July 9, 1964 and published in **Historic Hahn's Peak**, Stevonnson, (1976).*



God's Mountain

I look up at the mountain,
And my soul with rapture fills,
For as I gaze, it seems
That God is smiling down on me.

I look up at God's mountain,
It takes away my fears,
For my heart is filled with peace again,
As I know that He is near.

I look up at Hahn's Peak mountain,
As it pierces the heavens blue,
And I think of our love for each other,
And of you so dear and true.

Though God has taken you from me,
I feel your presence near,
As I look up at His mountain,
That you always held so dear.

*By Rose Wheeler, from her book **God's Mountain** (out-of-print), about the very early days of Hahn's Peak life and dedicated to her husband, children and grandchildren.*



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